

for 12 years, where I regularly used the fact that we needed 60 votes in the Senate to force colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together and find a way to pass legislation in a bipartisan manner. When I was in the executive branch in two Cabinet-level jobs in the Bush 43 administration and as Director of the Office of Legislative Affairs for Bush 41, that 60-vote necessity in the Senate calmed the passions within the administration and forced us to find common ground to work in a more bipartisan manner, resulting in more effective results that last the test of time. I know the benefits to our country of requiring more than a bare Senate majority that shifts back and forth because I have lived it in the House, in the Senate, and in the White House.

And it is not just me or other Republicans now saying that the legislative filibuster is good for our Federal system. Less than 5 years ago, 32 Senate Democrats, including then-Senator and now-Vice President Kamala Harris, joined with me and other Republicans in signing an open letter insisting the legislative filibuster should not change. This was at a time when there was a Democrat in the White House, but Republicans controlled the Senate. It appears that those 32 Democrats were happy to defend the filibuster as good for the country when they were in the minority but not now when the country is even further divided, and they have a majority. All but a couple of those Members have shifted their views.

I would encourage my Democratic colleagues to reread their own letter, which makes such a compelling case that this is about the country, not about one political party or another.

Back in 2005, Senator SCHUMER called abolishing the filibuster “a temper tantrum by those on the hard, hard right” who “want . . . their way every single time.” That was in 2005. Now he is majority leader, and he has changed his tune.

This seems shortsighted to me, since the history of the Senate is to change the majority regularly. We don’t know who is going to be in the majority in the next Senate.

Could the Senate rules be improved to allow more debate and more progress on legislation? Absolutely. There is bipartisan interest in this, and we should turn it to something constructive. After this political exercise we are going through right now, we should turn to the issue of reforming the rules around here. Let’s have each leader choose a few interested Members. Let’s hammer out a bipartisan proposal that allows more amendments and makes it easier to get legislation passed. It is not that hard. But eliminating the one tool that forces us to come together makes it harder to address those many challenges we face. It makes it harder to pass legislation, broadly supported and sustainable, to actually help the people we represent. That is what we were elected to do.

That is our job—not inflame the passions of our most committed and hard-line supporters but achieve results. And as I said at the outset, between inflation, and COVID, our southern border, and more, we have got plenty to do.

I urge my Democratic colleagues to step back from the brink, to think twice before trying to destroy what has made the U.S. Senate such a unique and valuable part of the world’s longest lasting and most successful democracy. And I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support sensible rules changes and recommit to use the 60-vote margin responsibly to generate consensus and find that elusive common ground that will best serve those we represent and that will keep our great Republic the envy of the world.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 6:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 5:30 p.m., recessed until 6:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PETERS).

MORNING BUSINESS—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

H.R. 5746

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I have just come back from a trip to Ukraine with six of my colleagues, a bipartisan group organized very ably by Senator PORTMAN and Senator SHAHEEN, to express our solidarity with the people of Ukraine in their fight for freedom and democracy against Russian aggression.

They need us to stand with them as they stand strong for their country’s independence against Vladimir Putin’s effort to intimidate them, potentially to invade their country, but, assuredly, in a hybrid war consisting of misinformation, cyber attack, and military action that is designed very simply to destabilize, demoralize, and degrade their country’s governance.

And as we stood with them, meeting with the President, Mr. Zelensky, and the top leadership, I couldn’t help but think of this country and how grateful we should be for our strength, our freedom, our democracy.

All of us, when we return from travel abroad, I think, express our gratitude to be Americans, to live in a country where these freedoms and our independence are assured but where we, too, need to be strong and ever vigilant and vigorous in protecting those freedoms.

We are the greatest Nation in the history of the world, the strongest and most freedom-loving on the planet. We are still an imperfect nation, still

struggling to do better and a work in progress, but we are proud to confront our imperfection and move forward in a way that demonstrates that we can broaden access to opportunity and to the right of people to determine their own destiny.

No freedom or right is more important than the right to vote. That is why we are here today and why I am so proud to have helped to lead the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act and to support the Freedom to Vote Act, which are designed to safeguard Americans’ right to vote and secure the sanctity of our elections.

And, today, just as Ukraine faces a threat to its independence and freedom, we too, in America, face a threat, not from Vladimir Putin directly, although he has sought to destabilize and degrade our democracy and continues to do so through cyber attacks and misinformation. Certainly, 2016’s interference in our elections is a warning bell, an alarm, that we need to be stronger against foreign interference.

But within, the threat is equally, if not more, alarming because what we are seeing across this great country in State after State are efforts to suppress the vote and restrict the franchise. Last year, more than 440 restriction bills were introduced in 49 States, and 19 of those States successfully enacted 34 laws that made it harder for people to vote. These laws make mail-in voting and early voting more difficult. They manipulate the boundaries of districts to reduce minority representation and have led to a purge of 3.1 million voters from the rolls in areas that were once covered by the Voting Rights Act preclearance requirement. We are seeing a tidal wave of voter suppression that continues even as we speak today on this floor.

The vote today comes in a week where we celebrate the legacy of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For the first time in my memory, I was out of the country on that day. But it was ever present in my mind and heart, and it should animate us today, that memory and legacy which were so powerfully expressed on August 6, 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. He called it “a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that has ever been won on any battlefield”—a triumph for freedom.

And it followed a mere 7 months after Dr. King launched a Southern Christian Leadership Conference campaign based in Selma, AL, with the aim of supporting voting rights legislation. It was a great day for America. It is one that has, rightly, received a paramount place in our history. It is taught to our children.

The Voting Rights Act represents the best of America, and its commitment to guaranteeing that members of every racial group would have equal voting opportunities stands as one of the best days in this country. But it was no layup for the civil rights movement. It